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INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

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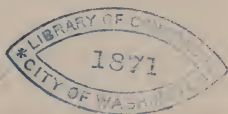
THE

INSPIRATION

OF

THE BIBLE.

Prepared for the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, and revised
by the Committee of Publication.



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P R E F A C E .

THE following Essay on the Inspiration of the Bible, has been prepared from the first part of an interesting book entitled *Lucilla, or the Reading of the Bible*, originally written in French by Rev. Mr. Monod, recently translated and published by the London Religious Tract Society. The design of the Author in that work is to show, in the first place, that the Bible is the Word of God, and consequently of Divine authority; and in the second place, that it is at once the privilege and the duty of all men to read it with reference to their personal salvation. The first part, the substance of which is given in the following pages, is in the form of Letters, and a Dialogue between a French Abbe, Mr. Lasalle and Lucilla, the wife of Mr. L., which for several reasons it was thought best to abridge and condense into a continuous discourse. In doing this, great care has been taken to preserve Mr. Monod's argument entire, and his language so far as was practicable. The portions omitted belong not to the substance but the form of the discussion; and the introduction and the sentences added by the

compiler, were necessary to connect the different portions together, and to render the work complete as an Essay. For the convenience of the reader, the book has been divided into chapters and sections. The second part, upon the Reading and Inspiration of the Bible, which is much larger than the first, may perhaps be given to the public in an abridged form at a future day. The part now published, is commended to the members of our Sabbath schools and Congregations generally, as a peculiarly beautiful and conclusive argument upon a subject of vital importance, with the earnest desire that it may be instrumental in leading many to the devout study of that Word the entrance of which giveth light.

Cambridge, Oct. 1843.

THE

INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

INTRODUCTION.

It is a melancholy and an alarming fact that infidelity, in various forms, is extensively prevalent in our country. Many openly deny the Divine origin and authority of the Bible, and oppose all the efforts by which it is promulgated; while others cherish their enmity to the truth in secret. There are also many who may be called unbelievers, who do not go to this extent. They feel a certain respect for religion. They sometimes wish that they were Christians. They have had moments of religious excitement, and have felt the necessity of giving up their hearts to God.

But the pleasures of the world, the duties connected with their position in society, the cares of life, have absorbed all their attention, and if the habit which they have acquired of attending public worship with their parents and friends has reminded them from time to time that there is a God, they rarely think of him except at church.

The reading or hearing of the Scriptures frequently produces upon such minds a double impression. On the one hand the Bible appears to bear such an impress of truth, and almost of divinity, as disposes them to believe that those who wrote it were indeed inspired of God. But, on the other hand, they see many things so strange, so opposed to all their natural feelings, that they have great difficulty in persuading themselves that they can be true, and that God can have thus spoken. Indeed they have great difficulty in believing that God has ever spoken to man in any way. A Revelation, Prophets, Miracles!—it appears to them hardly credible

that such things can be ; and although they are far from approving all that infidels say upon this subject, yet false reasonings sometimes have great influence upon their minds. They ask in doubt, whether these marvelous accounts can possibly be true ; and they really desire that some one would lay before them the proofs which demonstrate the divine origin of our holy religion.

Unquestionably our Sabbath schools contain many persons who are in this state of mind. And it is to them that the following remarks are especially addressed, in the hope, and with the earnest prayer that they may be brought to a right decision upon this momentous question, and receive with meekness the ingrafted Word, which is able to save their souls. It is our design to prove to them that the Holy Scriptures are inspired of God, and are, consequently of Divine authority ; and that it is at once the privilege and duty of all persons to read them with reference to their personal salvation.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE OBSTACLES TO FAITH IN THE PROPOSITION THAT GOD HAS REVEALED HIS WILL TO MEN IN THE BIBLE.

SECTION I.

MULTIPLICITY OF PRETENDED REVELATIONS.

THE first that presents itself is this: Every nation in the world pretends to a revealed religion. Each community has its own, which it has received directly from God, and which boasts its irresistible proofs, its miracles, its prophets. To believe them all is impossible, since they contradict and anathematize each other. But by what rule shall we choose? To believe one, and reject all the others, seems to be manifest partiality. We will be more consistent, and reject the whole of them.

The logic of this reasoning is at fault; and the difficulty disappears as soon as it is thoroughly examined. Let there be as

many religions as you will, which falsely boast their Divine origin, this is no proof that a true revelation does not somewhere exist. Because there are twenty-three persons who lay claim to a certain estate, ought the judges thence to conclude that there is no legitimate heir, and reject his pretensions, with those of the other aspirants, without examination.

But this is not all. So many groundless pretensions furnish evidence that a just claim does somewhere exist. Falsehood is in itself so futile, that it would never be able to make any way, did it not rest upon some known truth, by favor of which, it is established in public opinion. Those twenty-three competitors would never have thought of producing their false titles, had not the just claim of the rightful heir first suggested the idea to them. No one would have made counterfeit money, had not the true coin first existed; and charlatans in medicine exert so much influence over the mind of the people, only because there are

good physicians and real remedies. If God had not spoken to man, and if he had not spoken to him from the beginning, what Rousseau calls "the fantasy of revelations," would never have had its rise. And thus, instead of concluding that there is no true revelation, because there are so many false ones, we should say, on the contrary, that there are so many false ones, merely because there is a true revelation.*

If it should be objected, that, however this may be, it is sufficient that so many false revelations exist, to render it impossible to discriminate between them, and that were there a true revelation, it would be vain to attempt the discovery of it in the midst of so much confusion; our reply is, that this would not be so impracticable as many persons imagine. Much has been said concerning false religions, in order to throw discredit upon the true one. There are, however, but few which seriously and

*Pascal's thoughts. Part Second, xvi. 7.

incontestably assume a divine origin, in the same sense as does the religion of Jesus Christ. In other words, there are very few which offer us a book, whose author is well known, and which they pronounce inspired. Yet it is of these only that we must speak. It would be idle to alledge against us, the nameless claims of such religions as have no written testimony, and of which any thing may be affirmed, because they are lost in the night of past ages. We must have something on which to rest our discussion; and probably no one will seriously think of comparing the claim of the christian religion with those of the sybilline oracles, or of the lessons of Hermes Trismegistus.

We must then confine ourselves to those revelations which have a written evidence such as has been specified. Yet even here, it is maintained, that we shall find the religion of Jesus Christ, of Moses, of Mohammed, of Zoroaster, of Sanchoniathon, of Confucius, of Brahma, of Odin, &c. &c.

This we deny. Those who make this objection, speak according to the philosophers of the last century, who were not very scrupulous in their assertions. With the exception of Jesus Christ, Moses and Mohammed, there is nothing solid in the above allegation. All the other books just named are of doubtful authenticity, or do not lay claim to inspiration. It is one thing to meet with scattered allusions to Divine aid, and another to find the repeated assurance of inspiration, in the full sense of the word, as is the case in the Bible, and the Koran.

Reference is made to the revelation of Zoroaster. But even were not tradition involved in so much uncertainty, as to reckon as many as six different Zoroasters; and were not the authenticity of the Zendavesta a contested point, as is the case, still this book is rather a treatise of theology, philosophy, and other matters, than a professed revelation. The author is less a false prophet than a legislator; which is the

character given him by Anquetil du Perron; and he may be compared to Solon and Lycurgus, who invoked the authority of the gods in support of their laws, without declaring themselves to be prophets.

As to Confucius, he lays so little claim to this character, that the books of which he is considered the author are especially distinguished by the fact, that no trace of the doctrine of a Divinity, or of a future state, is to be found in them.*

Of Sanchoniathon we have only a fragment, and that is more than doubtful. It has passed through four different hands before it reaches us. It is to be found in the fathers of the church, who quote from Porphyry (the declared adversary of Christianity,) who quotes from Philon of Biblos, who quotes the Phenician author.

The Hindoos, indeed, possess books, which they believe to be inspired, but the origin of these books is any thing but

* Tennemann, Geschichte der Philosophie. S. 74.

authentic. The most impenetrable mystery covers their early history.

Now, let us speak of things that are clear and tangible. We find no religion, which claims Divine inspiration for well known writers, except these three; that of Moses, of Jesus Christ, and of Mohammed. And all these spring from the same source; for the religion of Christ is based upon that of Moses; and Mohammed pretends to rest his claim upon those of the other two.

The Old Testament, the most ancient book in existence, clearly proclaims its Divine inspiration; and it is from this common head that all accredited revelations, whether true or false, have their rise, and among these there are only three whose authority it is either possible or necessary to bring to the test.

It may be thought that there are very few men who are capable of studying and comparing these three religions, and these three books. But the labor would not be

infinite. Indeed it can be confined within quite narrow limits.

The Judaic and Christian religion hold together in such a manner, that if the second is of God, the first, to which it bears testimony, must be of God also. And the Christian religion is so strongly opposed to Mohammedanism, that if the one is Divine, the other cannot be so. Without proceeding farther, here is sufficient proof of this, namely; If Jesus Christ is God, according to the Gospel, Mohammed cannot be a greater prophet than Jesus Christ, as the Koran teaches, without subverting the Gospel from beginning to end. This being the case, we can begin our investigation with the religion of Jesus Christ. If we find that its origin is Divine, every thing will then be said in favor of Moses, and against Mohammed. We will examine, in their turn, the claims of the two others. This order of proceeding is the more eligible, because all must agree that appearances, to say the least, are

more in favor of the Christian religion than of either of the others. Our discussion is now much simplified, since this question is confined to one religion; and the documents connected with that religion relate to a period which is well known. What then becomes of all the declamation of infidels about the impossibility of advancing a single step in the inquiry in which we are engaged?

SECTION II.

THE GOSPEL REPUGNANT TO HUMAN REASON.

LET us begin, then, by examining the Christian religion, without prejudice to the others. But here we are met with an objection. We do not deny, say many, that the Gospel, especially in its morality, and in the character of its Author, possesses features so admirable, that we are sometimes half inclined to believe it. But this same religion contains things so incredible,

that we can neither admit nor comprehend them. We say with Rousseau, "If I find in its support proofs which I cannot overcome, I also find objections against it, which I cannot resolve. There are so many weighty reasons for and against it, that not knowing how to decide, I neither admit nor reject it. *In dubio abstine*, it is said, So I abstain."

But in such a case, we reply, it is impossible to abstain. The Gospel contradicts general opinion on many points. Whenever men remain undecided, they adopt the general opinion, and reject the Gospel. What Pascal has said, in speaking of the existence of God, "Not to believe that God is, is to believe that he is not," is still more true of the christian religion. Not to decide in its favor, is to decide against it. "He that is not with me," said Jesus Christ, "is against me."

But it is alledged that Christianity is repugnant to human reason in many things. For instance, that God should become

incarnate ; that Jesus Christ should be born of a virgin ; that the innocent should suffer for the guilty, &c., and that we must believe all this, whether we can or not, under the penalty of being burned in hell, through all eternity.

That men should find in the christian doctrine things which astonish and alarm them we can readily conceive. But the point which we must first elucidate, is this ; "Is the Gospel of God, or is it not?" Once convinced that God has spoken, we may not refuse to admit what he asserts, whether it be conformable to our opinions or not. For, in fact, God must know more about it than we do, and our reason cannot be degraded by yielding to the reason of the Creator. We tell our children that it is the earth which revolves and not the sun. This is contrary to the judgment of their youthful intelligence, and even to the testimony of their eyes. They believe it nevertheless, because *we* tell them so. And they

are right; they ought to trust our judgment rather than their own.

“Yes: But they are quite sure that it is their parents who speak to them; but we are not certain—we never can be certain that God has spoken to us in the Gospel. It is this first step that we find it impossible to take. For it is only by means of our reason that we can be sure of this, and if our reason as much revolts at the doctrine of the gospel, as it is satisfied by its proofs, what must we do? In this case, our reason must be at fault either on the one hand or the other; and might we not distrust it with equal justice, when weighing the arguments in favor of Christianity, as when scrutinizing its doctrine?”

We answer; by no means.

To weigh arguments, and to examine doctrines, are two very different things. Let us pursue our comparison. If the reason of our children as much revolts at hearing that the earth revolves, as it is convinced that their parents are addressing

them, what will they do? Shall we say that they may as well doubt that we have spoken, as admit that the earth moves?

But this is not pretended. It is said, that the children only want eyes to recognize their parents; whereas, in order to study the movements of the stars, it requires intelligence more than they possess, and observations which they are unable to make. Young as they are, they understand this distinction.

Very true; and out of the objector's own mouth shall he be judged. To weigh arguments, to ascertain whether miracles have been performed, or prophecies accomplished, only requires an examination of which reason is capable. But to estimate doctrines, to learn what God is, what are his nature, his will, his desires, requires light which man naturally does not possess. Whether the Bible comes from God, or from men, is, if we may be allowed the expression, a terrestrial fact, and one which falls under human observation. But every

thing concerning the nature, the will, and the designs of God, is a celestial fact, quite out of the range of our experience.

But the objector, still insists upon this simple dilemma. Either reason is able to guide us, or it is not. In the first case, it does not need a revelation. In the second, it would be unable to examine and verify one.

This is one of those general and absolute maxims, which, while they appear to simplify a question, only serve to render it more intricate. The truth is, that reason is capable of guiding us in some things, and incapable in others. It can guide us in all that concerns experience and observation; and this is all that we require in order to verify the authority of the Gospel. But with regard to the things of God, it cannot guide us; and this alone renders revelation necessary. It is still like our children, who can recognize their parents, but who cannot study the motions of the planets.

Let us make use of another comparison,

more applicable to this part of our subject. A blind man cannot find his way by himself; but he can perceive whether the voice of a person who offers to lead him be that of a friend. He is incompetent in the first case, because the organ of sight is wanting. He is competent in the second, because he possesses the organ of hearing. There is no contradiction in this. Neither is there any in us, when we make use of the faculties which we possess, to ascertain whether the voice of the gospel is indeed the voice of God; and when we afterwards supply the place of those faculties, by allowing ourselves to be led by the voice which we have ascertained to be Divine: distrustful till the requisite proofs be given; but after that, perfectly confiding. For, we need not be ashamed to confess that our finite intelligence does not stand less in need of light from God, than does the blind man of the eyes of his friend. "Reason," said Augustine, "would never yield, were it not convinced that there are cases where it

ought to submit. It is, then, just that it should submit, when it concludes that it ought to do so; and that it should not submit, when it concludes that it ought not to do so. But we must take care not to deceive ourselves.”*

SECTION III.

INCREDIBILITY OF MIRACLES.

It remains for us to inquire whether our reason can indeed verify the authority of the Gospel. The proofs of revelation, it is said, are, and ought to be supernatural; but our reason, which is according to nature, cannot appreciate anything that is supernatural. What we have called a “terrestrial fact,” seems to many to be of all things most mysterious and unintelligible; for what is more “celestial” than a miracle?

A miracle comes from heaven, it is true; but it is performed on earth. It is in this sense that we have called it a “terrestrial”

*Pascal's Thoughts. Pt. Second, vi. 2.

fact, which falls under our observation, in contra-distinction to the thoughts and decrees of God, which no man can see, and which cannot be known without a revelation.

The design of miracles being to prove the truth of revelation, they do not require to be revealed themselves. They are seen exactly as a natural event; and those who have seen them bear witness to others who have not. Did Jesus Christ rise from the dead? This is a question of history, which human reason can resolve with as much accuracy as if the inquiry were, "Was Cæsar assassinated in the Roman Senate?" The only difference that ought to be made between a miracle and a natural event is, that justice requires more essential evidence in favor of the former, because it is more difficult to believe than the other, and because its results are more important. But the miracle being once proved, our reason, well aware that human nature is

incapable of such achievements, is obliged to acknowledge the hand of God, and confess that a religion accompanied by such signs must be of God.

This you would doubtless concede, had you seen the miracle with your own eyes. But you complain that others have seen for you; and that witnesses have not been men of your choice. You exclaim with Rousseau, "How many men between us and God."

That is to say, in order to be more free to reject miracles, you question the validity of the witnesses, by whose testimony alone they can be established. But observe the consequences: If we can be sure of nothing that we have not seen with our own eyes, to what would we be reduced? How many things are there which we only know by the testimony of others, and of which nevertheless, we do not entertain the slightest doubt! What other proof have we that there is such a country as Africa, or that the history of Alexander is

true? Suppose that a true prophet should arise in Massachusetts, at this present time, who should publicly work real miracles in Boston, in Cambridge, in Worcester, and in many other places; does any one think that *no* means could be employed to attest their authenticity, which would convince other nations, and future ages, who had not been eye witnesses? Let us be candid. In reality infidels doubt the possibility of working miracles far more than they doubt the possibility of proving them, should they be performed. If they were not pre-occupied by the thought, that miracles are impossible in themselves, they would soon be led to acknowledge that a certain evidence suffices to prove the truth of any fact however strange; and that this evidence exists in favor of the gospel.

SECTION IV.

MIRACLES UNWORTHY OF GOD.

ONE reason why miracles appear impossible, is, that they are thought unworthy of Him to whom they are ascribed. The beautiful order of nature, it is said, which miracles profess to interrupt, is the greatness and glory of God. Could he not magnify one of his works, without detracting from another?

But should it ever be true that the order of the material world is the most beautiful of God's works, it does not follow that the momentary suspension of its course can be any detriment to his glory. For not only would this suspension give more striking prominence to the habitual harmony of creation, but also afford an incontestible proof that God is its author and its master. It is not the glory of the work, but the glory of the workman that is of importance. And what would the objector say,

if a time should come, when the heavens and the earth shall be consumed with a fervent heat, to give place to a "new heaven and a new earth?" This time will come, and this miracle of miracles will assuredly detract nothing from the glory of God.

But it is a great error to imagine, that the material world is the most glorious work of God. The most glorious work of God, is the world of spirits, the moral world. "All bodies," says Pascal, "the firmament, the stars, earth, and its kingdoms, are not worthy to be compared with the meanest mind; for it knows all these things, and it knows itself; but the body is incapable of knowledge." The highest glory of the material world is, that it typifies and represents to us the phenomena of the moral world, of which it is, as it were, an emblem and a reflection. "The heavens declare the glory of God;" and his invisible perfections are clearly seen from the creation of the world, "being

understood by the things that are made." Thus a tree, which grows and brings forth leaves and fruits in their season, is the emblem of a mind increasing in the knowledge of God, and expanding itself in light and works of mercy. In this point of view, comparisons may sometimes be arguments, in spite of the proverb: for the same hand created the two worlds, and the same design is observable in both. This being the case, it may enter into God's plan, to sacrifice, in some measure, natural order, to establish and preserve moral order. Such is the object of a miracle. It is like an opening wrought in the natural heavens, that we may perceive the spiritual heaven that lies beyond.

SECTION V.

THE GOSPEL NOT UNIVERSALLY KNOWN.

THERE is another objection, involving considerable difficulty, frequently urged

against the christian religion, namely, the fact of its not being universally known. It is indeed predicted that it will penetrate, at some time or another, to the remotest nations; and that it will overspread the whole earth. Predictions it is said, cost nothing. But in the mean while it allowed forty centuries to elapse before its appearance in the world; and during the eighteen centuries that have gone by since its appearance hardly has it reached a quarter of the human race. How many men, how many families, how many nations, have perished without having heard of its existence. Is it credible that a revelation, the knowledge of which would be indispensable to eternal salvation, should not be placed within the reach of every people? What! from the first—or at least from the fourth day of creation, the sun shines upon all men; and the light of revelation, so much more essential, is hidden from the greater portion of mankind!

The difficulty here raised, is more serious than any of the preceding. But it

does not bear upon religion alone. It concerns the whole of God's plan respecting his free and intelligent creatures. The sun sheds his light over the whole world at once, because this is a thing over which man has no control. But in all that relates to intellectual or moral progress, where men can participate in the work, we every where see that God allows them to do so, and constitutes them "co-workers" with himself, to use the expression of Holy Scripture. Neither the light of civilization, nor the knowledge of the arts, was at once promulgated among all nations. They were acquired by degrees, with the help of man, and the labor of centuries. Let us not complain of this. God confers honor upon man, when he thus associates him in some measure with his works. Why should we be surprised to see him following, with respect to religion, the same plan which he pursues in every thing else?

It may be replied that the cases are

very different; for that ignorance concerning the things just named, does not compromise salvation; whereas, ignorance in religion, according to the belief of Christians, prevents salvation; and all these miserable heathen are lost forever, because they do not believe in Jesus Christ, of whom they have never even heard.

But let us exaggerate nothing. The gospel does not declare this; neither does the church. "God will judge the world in righteousness;" and none will be punished for being ignorant of that which they could not possibly know. If the heathen be condemned, it will not be for having refused to believe the gospel, but for having sinned against the natural light which is granted to every man. It is for this reason that the apostle declares them to be without excuse, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans.

It is nevertheless true, we repeat, that here is a real difficulty. But we strenuously deny that there is any reason, on

this account, to decide against the christian religion. Some men would have acted differently, had they been in God's place. This is all. But does it appear to any one impossible that God should have designs that we cannot penetrate? And can he do nothing without having first submitted it to the approbation of his creature; and that creature sinful and fallible man? If men are so averse to the gradual progress of revelation, it is but just that they should indicate some other method of making it known.

Admit for a moment, that a revelation exists. How would you at once communicate it to every nation upon earth, without performing miracles more strange, and in far greater number, than those of the gospel? This is not all; You require that revelation should be within the reach, not only of every nation, but of every man; and in this you are consistent, for the reasons in favor of each are equal. Well, suppose that by some means, which we

cannot conceive, the knowledge of a revelation should extend to every country in the world. Might it not happen that future generations would abandon the religion of their forefathers, as many Asiatic nations have left the religion of Christ for that of Mohammed? What shall be done in this case? According to the objector, justice would require the whole series of miracles to be again performed, or nothing would be done. He would cover the earth with miracles, which he would renew every five or six generations; and yet he is the declared enemy of miracles. What a contradiction!

Many are ready to admit that had there ever been a time when all men might have known the revelation, and afterwards abandoned it, their ignorance might have been imputed, if not to each individual, at least to the whole human race; and although the difficulty would not then be wholly removed, yet it would have quite another character than when it was by God's own

act, not by any deed of man, that the knowledge of salvation was hid from three fourths of mankind.

It will perhaps surprise those who demand this condition of faith in the gospel, to be informed, that it has actually been furnished. There has been a time when it depended upon man alone, whether all the families of the earth should receive, we do not say the Gospel, but that portion of revelation, which was given to the patriarchs, and which sufficed to save them. There has been a time when it depended on man alone, whether all men should enjoy the means of salvation. We refer to the period immediately succeeding the fall of man, as recorded in the Bible. As soon as Adam had sinned, and before the birth of his children, God gave to him the first promise of grace,* which announced to sinful man a future Messiah, by believing on whom they might be saved, just as we may be saved by faith in the Messiah al-

* Gen. 3: 15.

ready come. Abel believed, and was saved. What Abel did, Cain might have done. The children of both might have done likewise; then their children's children; all, in short. It is impossible to follow this hypothesis, which, being realized, would have entirely changed the order of God's revelation. But, in fact, nothing on God's part has prevented the promise of grace, introduced into the world immediately after the fall, from being diffused wherever sin has extended. That this has not been the case, is the act of man; which is just what the objector required.

SECTION VI.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE GOSPEL.

BUT supposing this objection removed, there are others which seem to stand in the way of a cordial reception of the Gospel. There are certain questions continually asked touching the eternity of God, the in-

carnation of Christ, grace, everlasting punishment, and many other points of Christian doctrines, to which we must simply reply, "We do not know." We admit that these are difficulties, inexplicable difficulties; but difficulty is not doubt.

A thing may be so clearly demonstrated that it cannot be doubted; and yet it may give rise to questions which cannot be solved. The reason is plain. To know is one thing; thoroughly to understand is another. We may know, we may be fully convinced of a thing, of which we can discover neither the *how*, nor the *why*. Examples abound in every branch of human science. In natural history, we know that a grain of wheat, placed in the ground, germinates, grows, and produces an ear. But if you were asked how this takes place, could you tell? Suppose that a man who had no idea of the generation of plants, should hear you speak of it for the first time; what questions, what difficulties, what pretended impossibilities he

would suggest ! To all this you would be obliged to reply in your turn, "I do not know ;" and yet you would not for a moment doubt that the ear was produced by the grain of wheat.

With the naturalist, then, as with the Christian, difficulty is not doubt. In philosophy, I will, and my arm rises. An immaterial substance communicates motion to matter. How can you account for this ? We know not, yet we do not doubt. Mathematical science itself will furnish examples, with which all are acquainted. You demonstrate that the asymptote continually approaches the parabola, without their ever being able to meet. Again, you demonstrate that the earth, in its revolutions round the sun, arrived at the point where the shortest distance separates it from that luminary, and consequently where the force of attraction attains its greatest power, suddenly flies off, as by an inconceivable caprice, at the moment when it seems about to precipitate itself therein ;

and that three months after, by a contrary caprice, draws near to the sun, which one would imagine it was on the point of abandoning forever. Who can account for this? But who can doubt it?

Now the difficulties that we meet with in every other science, we must not be surprised to find in religion, which is the highest among them. We cannot explain a blade of grass, or a flower, and yet we are astonished that we cannot explain God! It may be clearly proved to us, that the christian religion comes from Him, without our being able to comprehend why he has not hitherto conferred its blessings upon every nation. It may be clearly proved to us, that Jesus Christ is at once God and man, without our being able to comprehend how the Divine and human natures are united in his person. It may be clearly proved to us, that eternal punishment exists, without our being able perfectly to understand its necessity.

After all, we only [act towards revela-

tion, as deists do toward natural religion. Doubtless, that also, has its mysteries; nevertheless, they do not destroy the Deist's faith, such as it is. Only to mention one. No one can deny that evil exists in the world, since all men see it with their own eyes. Can you explain how it came there? Of all mysteries this is at once the most clearly proved, and the most inexplicable; and reason, constrained to admit this truth, is not very consistent in refusing to believe every other.

Yes, we admit that there are many things in religion which are above our comprehension, but this neither surprises nor distresses us. We expected it. We understand that we cannot understand. There are difficulties every where. It is impossible it should be otherwise, not only for us, but more or less for every created being. A creature to whom nothing would be incomprehensible, would stand in God's place; would see with God's eye; would be God. It is a contradiction in terms.

No shadows are visible to him who contemplates objects illumined by the sun, from the sun itself; but we, who are upon earth, see shadows. It is a necessity incident to our position. For the same reason, he who contemplates objects from the bosom of God, the centre and principle of creation, finds no obscurity; all things being seen, not only in their true light, but in their true connection with each other. But for us, for all created beings, there are difficulties; there always will be. It is a law of our nature. It would be unreasonable, therefore, to seek a religious system absolutely free from them. We shall never find one. It neither exists for us, nor for the angels themselves. We must be content to adopt that which, with the best proofs in its favor, presents the least difficulties. Mark this, then: There are difficulties in the christian's creed; but there are fewer than in that of the unbeliever; and reason alone should lead us to become christians, because, in order to reject the

Gospel, we should require a degree of credulity of which, we trust, few comparatively, are capable.

It is then the infidel, who pretends to believe in nothing, who is the most credulous of the two. Men cannot believe in nothing. They must believe in something. For if the Bible is not of God, it is of man, is it not? The Bible is of God; this is the christian's belief. The Bible is of men; this is the creed of the infidel. Then we maintain that his belief is surrounded by much greater difficulties than ours. Or, to amplify the idea, if there are difficulties in the way of the christian's belief, there are absolute impossibilities in the way of the infidel's; and if, in order to believe what we believe, we must bow down our heads before God, which we do without shame, the infidel, in order to believe what he believes, must contradict what is most evident in observation, in experience, and in history.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE POSITIVE PROOFS OF A DIVINE REVELATION.

It has been our object thus far to show, that there are no objections which opposers urge with so much confidence, to which the gospel has not something substantial to offer in reply. It is now their turn to defend themselves, and ours to attack; and we will do so as systematically, and as effectually as possible in our narrow limits.

SECTION I.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE BIBLE TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR.

The Bible exists. We must account for its origin. Our explanation is this: God inspired the men by whom it was written, and revealed himself in it to mankind.

This explanation has its difficulties. We have already considered them, and we will not again revert to them. We will confine ourselves to a general remark on those difficulties. They bear almost entirely on points which depend upon the Divine will or knowledge. "It is inconsistent with the wisdom or the greatness of God, to reveal himself to men;" or, again, "supposing that God should purpose to reveal himself, it is incredible that he should have employed, to that end, the means which the gospel declares him to have done;" or, "there are certain doctrines in the gospel, which are not in accordance with God's perfections." "God will not," "God ought not:" such are the unvarying objections of some; for they dare not say, "God can not." In order to render argument of this kind conclusive, we should have a perfect knowledge of the Divine nature. Do infidels profess this knowledge? And instead of seeking to discover what God *has done*, we pretend, in the first place, to

judge what *he ought to do*, may we not be deceiving ourselves? This being the case, the objections referred to are vague and unfounded. They are conjectures more or less probable; but nothing more. We may say, "we think," we presume," but never "we know." The explanation which we give of the origin of the Bible, is in many respects incredible, according to some men's opinion; but it presents nothing that is impossible. It is not absurd.

But, on the other hand, the explanation, according to which the Bible is an ordinary book, falsely claiming divine inspiration, is surrounded with difficulties; bearing not on so mysterious a subject as the nature of God, but on what is best known and most clearly proved among men. This explanation is so strongly opposed to facts, and to common sense, that you cannot attempt to support it without falling into absurdities. Our expressions are strong; we hasten to justify them.

SECTION II.

PROPHECY.

To throw light upon our view of the subject, let us leave generalities, and fix our attention on a single point. We choose prophecy; and more especially the prophecies concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament.

Let us first clearly put the question. In the Old Testament, the last pages of which were written five hundred years before the Christian era, we find a great number of predictions which refer to a future prophet. In the New Testament we find all those predictions fulfilled in the history of Jesus Christ. We explain this without difficulty, by saying that Jesus Christ was sent by God, who caused him to be announced to the world by inspired writers, a long time beforehand. But they, who believe neither in the divine mission of Jesus Christ, nor in the inspiration of the prophets, how can

they explain the evident connection between the prediction and the event?

They answer by saying, "it is impossible that a man should announce events which are to happen in the course of five or six hundred years, and that they should take place exactly as he has said."

Impossible! That is a strong expression, and one which they have here no right to use. Let us illustrate our meaning by a circumstance that happened a few days ago. In ascending a hill on foot, we found ourself walking side by side with a person who was returning from town. We were admiring the setting sun. He made some remarks, which led us to remind him, that it is the earth that moves, and not the sun. We did not believe that a man could be found in the country who was ignorant of this fact. But he was astonished. "Impossible!" cried he, looking stedfastly at us, to see if we were jesting. When he was convinced that we spoke seriously, "Impossible!" he repeated. "I see the

sun rise and set; and I am very sure that I feel the earth firm under my feet." We could not get him any farther. It was in vain that we brought forth proofs, which we nevertheless endeavored to suit to his capacity. His mind was made up; he would listen to nothing we had to say.

Now we ask, which is the more credulous, this man, incredulous concerning the motion of the earth, and refusing to hear any thing contrary to his opinions, or the scientific man, believing in this motion, because he has observed, seen, and heard?

The application is obvious. If you have not examined the problem of the prophecies, we who examine, who listen, who observe, are less credulous than you, who have neither eyes nor ears for this inquiry; and who form a fixed opinion before you have consulted facts, by which you will not afterwards allow yourself to be convinced. We speak to those who are acquainted with science and its history. Is it not true, that science first deserved its

name, from the period when Bacon laid down this principle: "First observe facts, and then seek the theory by which they may be best explained?" Well, in religion we proceed according to the method of Bacon; observing first, and afterwards drawing our conclusions: and the infidel, proceeds according to the ancient method, forming a theory, *a priori*, and leaving facts out of the question.

We are here reminded of an argument of Rousseau, which is often brought forward as decisive upon this subject. "Three things," says he, "whose concurrence is impossible, are necessary to my giving credence to the prophecies. I must be witness of the prophecy—witness of the event—and thoroughly convinced that the event could not accidentally coincide with the prophecy."

This passage will assist us in our illumination. Rousseau doubtless wishes to have been witness of the prophecy, in order to be convinced that there was no fraud in the

prediction. He wishes to have been witness of the event, in order to be assured that there was none in the fulfillment. Lastly, he wishes it to be clearly proved to him, that the event does not accidentally coincide with the prophecy, in order to be convinced that there was no preconcerted plan. He thus furnishes the infidel with three ways of explaining the agreement of the event with the prophecy, independent of Divine interposition. First explanation: Either there has been no preconcerted scheme at all; it is an accidental coincidence; for if there has been any preconcerted scheme, it is not of God, but of men, who may have arranged the matter in two different ways. Second explanation: They may have prepared the event to suit the prophecy. Third explanation: They may have composed the prophecy to suit the event already transpired. With these three strong holds, the infidel thinks himself well fortified to resist our attack.

SECTION III.

IS THE COINCIDENCE OF THE EVENT WITH PROPHECY
ACCIDENTAL?

LET us examine. The accidental coincidence is supposed to be a very simple means. For why, it is asked, may we not suppose that the pretended prophets of the Old Testament have risked certain predictions, which have been accomplished by a caprice of fortune as it may happen that dice thrown at random, may present a number which has been previously mentioned? However precise, however explicit may be the prophecy, this is not absolutely impossible.

This is a pure sophism. Let us not dispute about words. "This is not absolutely impossible;" no, if by that you only mean that it does not imply a contradiction.

But this is not the less impossible, *absolutely impossible*, with respect to prophecies,

which possess a certain degree of precision and explicitness. Neither is it absolutely impossible that printed characters, promiscuously shaken together and scattered, should have produced the Bible; nor that the order of the universe was formed by the accidental meeting of atoms in the regions of space; and, nevertheless, he who believes this is a fool. It is Rousseau himself who says so; and like the man who appealed from Philip drunk to Philip sober, we oppose Rousseau impartial to Rousseau prejudiced. "You may talk to me as much as you please of combinations and chances; what end will it answer to reduce me to silence, if you cannot persuade me of the truth of what you advance? And how will you divest me of that involuntary sentiment, which continually contradicts you? I confess that I ought not to be surprised that any possible thing should happen, when the rarity of the event is compensated by the great odds that it did not happen. And yet, if any one was to

tell me that a number of printer's types jumbled promiscuously together, had disposed themselves in the order of the letters composing the *Æneid*, I certainly should not deign to take one step to verify or disprove such a story. It may be said, I forget the number of chances: but pray how many must I suppose to render such a combination in any degree probable? I, who see only the one, must conclude that there is an infinite number against it, and that it is not the effect of chance."* Remark this; and the same principles which you think incontestable, when they are adduced to prove the existence of God, bear in mind when called upon to verify the arguments in favor of revelation. This is all we ask.

Our opponents will probably admit that there are certain combinations that cannot be the effect of chance; and consider Rousseau's language on the accidental coinci-

* Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard.

dence of the event with the prophecy as rather absolute. But still, they will maintain, prophecies should be very full, very explicit, in order that this coincidence may not be admitted. For though we do not see letters thrown at hazard produce an *Æneid*, yet we sometimes meet with singular coincidences of this kind, and which it would be difficult to believe, if one were not constrained by facts to admit their reality. The newspapers, in giving an account of a great fire, stated that the same catastrophe had already happened to the same town, on the same day of the week and month, fifty years ago. They have recently spoken of an old man, who died at the same age, and on the same day of the year, as his father, and as his grandfather did. How often do we hear of dreams accomplished, or presentiments fulfilled. We do not, however, on that account, believe in either dreams or presentiments. They are the freaks of chance, left entirely to itself. With the help of human prudence, as might

be the case in a prediction, it might do much more. The pretended prophet, by a skillful calculation, might discern the probable consequences of certain situations: or, again, he might clothe his predictions in language so equivocal, that they could hardly fail to be accomplished in one way or another. Thus the Delphic oracle did not run any great risk of compromising itself, in stating that Cræsus would ruin a great empire, if he declared war against Cyrus; and Nostradamus, though no sorcerer, has made many predictions, which are realized in the same manner. But what is more astonishing, the augury of Vettius Valens, who lived five hundred years before Christ, stated that the Roman power would last twelve centuries, if it were true that Romulus had seen twelve vultures, when he consulted the flight of birds with his brother Remus; and, in effect, about twelve centuries elapsed between the foundation of Rome, and the fall of the Western empire. Tasso sometimes announced the French

revolution; and Seneca predicted the discovery of America, with a precision, which, it is said, the Jewish prophets will find it difficult to surpass. "Show me in your Bible, says Collins, a prophecy as clear, and which has been as exactly accomplished, as that which Seneca made by mere chance, concerning the discovery of America, by Columbus, and I will believe."

To all this we reply: Among the coincidences referred to, there are some which are indeed remarkable; especially the augury of Vettius Valens. As to the prophecy of Seneca, which one must be exceedingly prejudiced to compare with those of the Bible, there is every reason to think that it is a mere historical recital. It only affords a proof among many others, that America was not entirely unknown to the ancients, having been visited, at a very remote period, by the Phenician merchant.*

It may be somewhat difficult to convince

* See Didorus Siculus, lib. iv. p. 299, 300. Edit. Rhodoman.

those who have never read the Bible, or whose notions of it are superficial, how different are the prophecies of the Old Testament, from those with which they are frequently compared. We hope, nevertheless, to be able to persuade them that this comparison is unjust, and their explanation inadmissible.

What, in fact, do all these examples prove? That among so many false presages, or presentiments, which have remained unfulfilled, one or two have been found which the event has justified. These alone have been remembered; and the others, by far the greater number, have been forgotten. This we can conceive, while we smile at the freaks of chance, or these successful attempts of human sagacity; and we would seek no other explanation of the prophecies of the Old Testament which are accomplished in the New, did we see but one or two predictions among a thousand, which fortune might have amused itself in verifying, leaving all the rest to

fall to the ground. But the case is quite different. Here we have a body of prophecies, one resting upon another, all tending towards the same fact, the greatest revolution that has ever occurred in the history of mankind; and lastly, the whole fulfilled in so wonderful a manner, that we defy any man to cite a single one that has been contradicted by the event.

We shall not content ourselves with merely asserting this. We shall proceed to prove it. First of all, observe that the Old Testament does not merely contain a few isolated prophecies. Its predictions are so numerous, and so closely connected together, that one might regard the Old Testament, considered as a whole, every where anticipating a new order of things, as forming one great prophecy. As soon as sin had entered into the world, it announces, under the name of "the seed of the woman," a Restorer, who will destroy the work of the tempter, and raise fallen man. From this passage, which is found in the

third page of the book, the Old Testament is but, as it were, a pre-existing history of this Restorer, and of a certain kingdom which he will found upon earth. The country and the people of the Messiah are already indicated in the twelfth chapter of Genesis. He was to be born of the seed of Abraham, in the land of Canaan, which God gave to Abraham for this very purpose. It was this well known promise which led Abraham to Palestine; which brought back his descendants after an exile of four hundred years; in short, which formed the Jewish nation. It is this which leads Pascal to say, that "there is a great difference between a book made by a private individual, and sent forth among a nation, and one which itself makes a nation." This commencement may give the reader some idea of the prominent part given to the Messiah throughout the Old Testament. Take from Roman history the augury of Vettius Valens, and the twelve vultures of Romulus, and what does it lose? Nothing

more than an interesting anecdote; and many have learned the history who never even heard of Vettius Valens. But take from Jewish history the promise of a Messiah, and you annihilate it. You can no longer account for the origin, nor the religion, nor the manners, of this singular people, whose distinctive characteristic has always been, and still is, the expectation of a Messiah.

After the calling of Abraham, you may trace the course of prophecy throughout the whole of the Old Testament. You will see it unfold and display itself, from age to age, from prophet to prophet, during an interval of two thousand years, till at length it is accomplished in Jesus Christ, whose name signifies Jesus — Messiah. Each prophet, in his turn, seems to have been sent only to bear witness of him, and to add his link to the chain of the narrative in which we find clearly indicated the people descended from Abraham, the tribe of that people, the family of that tribe, the time, the place, in which the Messiah

should appear, with all that he should do, and all that would be done to him. Hence this profound expression in the Apocalypse, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," Rev. 19: 10. And lastly, remember, that, besides all these prophecies, or rather this perpetual prophecy, the Old Testament contains a succession of facts and institutions which bear reference to the Messiah and to his work. We allude, especially, to those sacrifices which prefigured a sacrifice to come, and to which, according to Daniel, the Messiah would put an end. And, wonderful to relate ! Jesus Christ did indeed put an end to them. They were constantly offered till his appearance, but ceased almost immediately after his death ; yet the Jews have the same reason for offering them now, which they had before the christian era, since they are still in expectation of the Saviour, for whom their fathers waited.

Such is the great prophetic view which

pervades every part of the Old Testament, and which, in fact, has given to its writers the name of prophets. Does any one wish to feel the truth of this? Open it almost any where, and you will hardly find a page which does not afford a glimpse into futurity; or some direct reference to the Messiah and his kingdom. Moreover, this characteristic of the Old Testament is sufficiently proved by the expectation in which we still see the Jews, who are the disciples of the Old Testament. We could show that they looked for the Messiah precisely at the time of Christ's birth. But it suffices for our purpose, that they have always expected him; and that, refusing to recognize him in Jesus Christ, they still expect him, as we all are witnesses. It is an unquestionable indication that they have found in their books, as we have just said, not only prophecies, but a constant and general prophecy, of the Messiah and his kingdom. Should a prophecy of this nature be fulfilled, it would be preposterous

to explain it by an accidental coincidence, as might be the case with one or two isolated predictions. There can be no comparison between the prophecies of the Old Testament and the augury of Vettius Valens, unless this augury had formed part of a series of presages, which had succeeded each other, century after century, from the foundation of Rome. What do we say? from the beginning of the world; and had announced, with ever increasing precision, the fall of the Roman Empire.

SECTION IV.

ALLEGED VAGUENESS AND OBSCURITY OF PROPHECY.

What has now been said of the prophetic character of the Old Testament, will not be denied by any one who has ever read it; but the conclusion which we think may, and ought to be, drawn from it, may be rejected on the assumed ground, that the generality and extent of the prophecy

do not prevent its accidental fulfillment. That this book contains a compact and continuous prophecy, is allowed. But it is said, this is simply a single prophecy, re-produced under different forms; the prophets having copied one another. Why then should it not fall in with the event, as well as the augury of Vettius Valens, or the prediction of Seneca? The very generality of the prophecy, it is maintained, is a circumstance in its favor; that which is more general being also more vague, and more easily adapted to any application it may chance to encounter.

This would all be very well, if we found in the Old Testament nothing but a general prophecy. But on this general prophecy rise and rest a multitude of special prophecies, which enter into the detail of events, and characterize the Messiah with a precision which could find no coincidence in mere fortuitous occurrences. So true is this, that you might collect materials for writing a brief history of the

Messiah from the prophets alone, a history which you would afterwards find in the New Testament, accomplished, fact for fact, in Jesus Christ.

Do you inquire at what time the Messiah will appear? Daniel predicts (9:24—27,) that he will come seventy weeks, (weeks of years,) or four hundred and ninety years after the going forth of a commandment to release the Jews from their captivity, and to rebuild Jerusalem; and Haggai, (2: 6—9,) that he shall honor the second temple with his presence. (See also Mal. 3: 1.) Jesus appears at the appointed time, reckoning from the edict of Artaxerxes, and often shows himself in the second temple, which was destroyed by Titus forty years afterwards, as Daniel states in the same passage.

In what place will he be born? Micah informs us, (5: 2,) that it is in the tribe of Judah, in the little town of Bethlehem. From what family will he descend? To this a whole train of prophets reply, that

he will descend from Abraham, (Gen. 12: 3; 22: 18,) in the line of Isaac, (Gen. 26: 3, 4,) then of Jacob, (Gen. 28: 14; Numb. 24: 17,) then of Judah, (Gen. 49: 10,) and thus in succession to David. Now it is a fact, that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, and of the family of David.

Do you wish to know the events of his life, with those which will precede his birth, and succeed his death? All this is written in the Old Testament: and if you connect the predictions which we are about to quote, with the corresponding passages in the gospels, which we shall also point out, you will find the accomplishment as exact as the prophecy is circumstantial. He shall send a prophet, who will prepare the way before him. (Mal. 3: 1; Is. 40: 3—5.) You recognize John the Baptist. He shall be despised and rejected of men, Messiah though he be, and shall exhibit an unheard of union of greatness and abasement. (Is. 53.) This celebrated chapter has been called a fifth gos-

pel. He shall enter into Jerusalem seated on an ass. (Zech. 9: 9, compared with Matt. 21: 1—9.) He shall be betrayed by a friend, and sold for thirty pieces of silver, which shall afterwards be paid to a potter. (Psa. 41: 9; Zech. 11: 12, 13; with Matt. 26: 15; 27, 3—7.) He shall be condemned as a malefactor; and he shall submit to his unjust sentence with lamb-like resignation. (Isa. 53: 6, 7, 12, with the entire account of the passion.) They shall pierce his hands and his feet, they shall part his garments among them, and cast lots upon his vesture. (Psa. 22: 16—18, with John 19: 18, 23, 24.) He shall be laughed to scorn, in the midst of his most dreadful agonies. (Psa. 22: 2, 7—9, with Matt. 27: 39—44.) They shall give him vinegar mingled with gall to drink. (Psa. 69: 21, with Matt. 27: 34.) Though destined to be buried with the wicked, he shall, on the contrary, make his grave with the rich. (Isa. 53: 9, with Matt. 27: 38, 57—60.) When all will seem lost, then

his triumph will begin. After his death his work shall be crowned with full success; and his doctrine, rejected by the Jews, shall subdue kings and nations, and at length cover the whole earth. (Isa. 53: 10, 12; 49: 1—8; Gen. 22: 18.)

Are these vague and equivocal predictions, which may be applied to any one, or which chance alone might undertake to realize? Produce, in all history, another man, besides Jesus Christ, to whom the whole of these facts, though they form but a small portion of the prophecy, may be applied; a man born in Bethlehem, of the family of David, at the time when the second temple was in existence, but shortly before its destruction; who was betrayed, sold for thirty pieces of silver, put to an ignominious death, like a felon, and nevertheless buried like a rich man; in short, who was at once the most despised, and the most honored of mankind; and who, rejected during his life-time, and believed in only after his death, has produced a universal revolution in the world.

It will not be pretended by any sane person, that the fulfillment of prophecies so explicit as these can be explained by chance, like that of the augury of Valens, or the presentiment of Seneca. But that which the infidel now will contest is, the meaning we give to the prophecies of the Old Testament. He does not consider them in the same light that we do. He tells us that there is hardly one that is expressed in clear and natural terms; and that the greater part are so involved in the recital of contemporary events, that it is very difficult to distinguish what refers to the present, from what refers to the future. Why, it is asked, is not the language of prophecy as lucid as that of history itself? Take, for instance, the first three or four predictions that have been referred to. How do we know that this "Desire of all nations," of whom Haggai speaks, or, "He that is to be Ruler in Israel," whom Micah tells us will be born in Bethlehem, is indeed the Messiah? How can we be sure

that he is referred to in the "Seed of Abraham," or, especially in this "Star coming out of Jacob," to which one may give whatever interpretation he likes? All this appears to the objector obscure; and he maintains, that to give any weight to our argument, it ought to be clear as day.

We admit that a real difficulty is here raised, and those who are of a contentious disposition may flatter themselves that it justifies their unbelief. It may, however, be removed, and we are confident that all candid inquirers after truth, will be satisfied by the considerations we are about to offer.

In the first place, we agree that the language of prophecy is not, in general, so clear as that of history. Why? Various reasons have been assigned. On this subject we can only form conjectures; and we confine ourselves to a single observation. This partial obscurity of prophecy, harmonizes with the whole of God's providential plan. For, in the first place, God lays no

restraint on the freedom of man ; and he would be obliged to do so with respect to certain prophecies, if they were such as this objection requires ; because the enemies of the faith might then undertake to prevent their accomplishment. They must be so situated, that they can fulfill the prophecy without being aware of it themselves. Then, again, God does not force man's conviction. He does not render truth so self-evident, that there remains nothing for man to do. On the contrary, he everywhere obliges him to seek and to pursue it, inasmuch as religion consists rather in the feelings of the heart, than in the opinions of the mind. This remark is not applicable to revealed religion only ; it is the same with natural religion. The existence of God, and the immortality of the soul, do they seem as clear as the day ? If such is the case, the profession of the Vicaire Savoyard might have been much shorter than it is. Do not, then, require in favor of revelation evidence which reason itself does

not possess; and since men are satisfied with proofs in favor of the existence of God, and of a future state, which suffice to persuade a candid mind, let them be satisfied if prophecies are sufficiently clear to enable them to ascertain, after the event, that they had previously announced it. We have this in the Old Testament; and we have still more: We have even all that is requisite to enable us to foresee the event; at least when it is of great importance.

Besides, there are in the Old Testament, prophecies much less obscure than the generality of those concerning the Messiah. On this point they could hardly have been so clear as many desire, without the christian religion being proclaimed at the same time as the Jewish, which would have interrupted the progressive march of revelation.

They are involved, it is said, in the relation of contemporary events. This is true; but it is by this means that they are

introduced. What they thus lose in clearness, they gain in depth and extensiveness. But we can show other prophecies, much clearer than these, and nearly such as the objector requires. A brief history of Egypt has been written from the prophecies; and the predictions of Daniel concerning the four monarchies, gave Rollin the plan of his ancient history.

But men are not yet prepared to bear prophecies so precise. They now complain of want of clearness; they would then complain that there was too much. "This is not prophecy," they would say; "it is history"; and its very clearness would cause them to doubt. We speak from personal experience. We have found more faith required to believe prophecies perfectly intelligible, than to believe those which remained slightly veiled till the time of the event. Because we feel that, generally speaking, the language of prophecy neither can be, nor ought to be, as lucid as that of history. We know where

to find prophecies in exact accordance with the objector's ideas, and clear as the day. They abound in the apocryphal writings. There is a book, falsely ascribed to Isaiah, and entitled, "The ascension of Isaiah." There you will find announced in detail, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, with the number of his disciples, their labors in this world, &c. One might imagine that he was reading the Acts of the Apostles. But here it is that you feel the difference between the work of God, and the work of man: and I have not the least doubt, that if the prophecies of the Old Testament had been written after the events, they would have been sufficiently clear to betray their human origin, and to destroy all confidence in their authenticity. Such as they are, they possess a degree of light which, we repeat, enables us, not only to recognize the event which they predict,—which would be sufficient,—but also to foresee it.

We must here make an important observation. If the prophecies of the Old Testa-

ment are wanting in clearness, when each is considered separately, the case is altered when they are regarded as a whole, and each one is viewed in its connection with prophecy in general. What would otherwise be obscure, is no longer so when placed in this light; because the promise, which is every where found, dispels whatever uncertainty might remain. Thus when it is said, "He that is to be Ruler in Israel," will be born in Bethlehem, we cannot tell, you say, whether the Messiah or some Jewish prince is meant. We might reply, that the words which follow, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," are sufficient to clear up any doubt upon this subject; since the Messiah only is the everlasting king.

But should this elucidation be withheld, still there could be no ambiguity here in the Old Testament, which speaks from the beginning to the end of a Messiah to come. The very fact, that you find no one else, to whom this passage may be applied, com-

pels us to apply it to the Messiah himself. The same thing may be said of the "Desire of all nations," who should appear in the second temple.

We are constrained to allow that this refers to the Messiah, even were we not convinced by what precedes and what follows; especially when we connect it with this prediction of Malachi, (3: 1:) "The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in." The same observation holds good respecting the words used to designate the line from which the Messiah should descend. "The Seed of Abraham;" "The star of Jacob." The word "star," is used in the figurative style of the prophets, to signify one who exercises high authority, or who occupies a brilliant position. This "star," which "shall come out of Jacob," might apply to any one in an ordinary book; but in the Old Testament it can be no other than the Messiah. Besides, all these predictions

hold together, and when we see clearly announced, (Jer. 33: 15,) that the Messiah will descend from David, we are completely assured that we have rightly interpreted "the star of Jacob," and the "Seed of Abraham;" since descending from David, he must necessarily descend from Judah, Jacob, Israel, and Abraham.

There is one simple argument, however, bearing upon the point of obscurity in the prophecies, which will enable us to dispense with every other. The very thing which many imagine impossible, namely, to foresee the history of the Messiah, has been done; and the best proof that the predictions of the Old Testament are not involved in such utter darkness, is, that they were understood by the Jews before the event. This fact alone, that the Jews have always expected a Messiah, proves, at least, that they found no fatal obscurity in the general prophecy concerning him. And we shall soon see that they found none in the more important of the special proph-

ecies. They understood that the Messiah would appear at the time when Jesus Christ was born. They understood this so well, and so long before the event, that they had time to communicate their impressions on the subject to the surrounding nations, and throughout the whole extent of the Roman empire. The history of the New Testament shows us, that this expectation generally prevailed among the Jews; and profane historians inform us, that its fame had reached even Rome, where they knew not what to think of it. There is a celebrated passage of Tacitus, in his narration of the siege of Jerusalem, (Hist. v. 13 :) "If we may believe the assertion of a great number of men, it was written in the ancient books of the priests, that just at this time the east would acquire the preponderance, and the empire would fall into the hands of men coming from Judea." The testimony is corroborated by that of Suetonius, who says, speaking also of the reign of Vespasian (i. 4 :) "It was an old, firmly established and prevalent opinion, in throughout

the east, that soothsayers had promised the empire, at this very epoch, to men coming from Judea." The Jews also understood that the Messiah would descend from the house of David; for they called him, as we see in the New Testament, (Matt. 22: 42,) and they still call him, "the Son of David." They understood that he would be born in Bethlehem, for they gave information to that effect to Herod, on the faith of the prophecy of Micah, which has been pronounced not sufficiently clear; and it was for this reason that Herod caused the children of Bethlehem to be slaughtered, imagining this "king of the Jews," whom every one expected, to be a temporal sovereign, who would succeed him in authority. And as the "star of Jacob" has been referred to, we will add, that it was clearly understood to mean the Messiah; since the false Messiah, Coziba, took the name of Barcochab, or "son of the star;" in allusion to this prophecy of Balaam.*

* Basnage, Hist. of the Jews, p. 315.

SECTION V.

IMPOSSIBILITY OF AN ACCIDENTAL FULFILLMENT.

In view of all this we have reason to conclude, that the prophecies of the Old Testament are not so obscure, but that we can affirm they agree with the history of Jesus Christ, and this agreement, once acknowledged, cannot be explained by an accidental coincidence. The prediction is, at the same time, too full, and too circumstantial. The general prophecy will not allow us to mistake the sense of the special prophecies, which it concentrates on the Messiah and his work; and the special prophecies, in their turn, will not allow us to magnify the first imposter into the Messiah, since they characterize him too exactly to admit of a mistake. When united, they form a perfect whole—a mass, a body of predictions, whose accomplishment we cannot possibly ascribe to accident; especially, when you consider that, while so many

points are verified in Jesus Christ, not one is contradicted. Were we, in the present case, to imagine a fortuitous coincidence, we should consider ourselves as falling into the grossest error and absurdity. We had rather believe the miracles of God, than those of mere chance; and if we find no other explanation of the agreement of the event with the prophecy, to escape the imputation of credulity, we see no refuge but faith.

SECTION V.

ALLEGED FRAUD IN RESPECT TO THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY.

Thus the infidel's first strong hold is demolished. But he has another. The agreement of the event with the prophecy cannot be explained without a pre-concerted plan. Admitted; but this plan, he says, is of man, and not of God. Fraud has been employed in this instance, as in every revelation, past, present, and to come.

It is no longer by chance, then, but by fraud, that you undertake to explain prophecy.

Fraud ! It is very evident that those who make this unworthy supposition, are no better acquainted with the New Testament than with the Old. Had they read it, even in a cursory manner, they must have been struck at every page by a candor, a simplicity, a naturalness, not to be found in the same degree in any other book ; and they would have acknowledged that the apostles had no other reward to expect for so infamous a deception, than persecution and martyrdom. Upon the hypothesis of fraud, how inexplicable is their conduct and language ! Truly the infidel leaves one difficulty only to encounter a greater. " The gospel, says one, bears an imprint of truth so great, so striking, so inimitable, that its inventor would be more wonderful than its hero." However, for the sake of argument, we will consent to do violence to our feelings, and to

our reason, and will suppose that the apostles intended to deceive men concerning the prophecies. Could they do so? This question will suffice us. How would they have set to work?

In one of two ways; they either made the event for the prophecy, or the prophecy for the event.

Let us suppose that they attempted to adapt the event to suit the prophecy. The prophecy existed in the Old Testament. They had only to make the event to agree with the prophecy, by purposely arranging it to that effect. Is there any thing incredible in this? This supposition, we may remark in passing, admits that prophecy is not altogether unintelligible; for before the event could be arranged to suit it, it must necessarily have been understood.

But how did they make the event agree with the prophecy? Did they take measures in order that the predicted events might really occur? Or did they relate them as having happened, when in fact,

nothing of the kind had really come to pass? Did they *direct* history, or did they *invent* it?

Let us suppose that they attempted to do both. Why, in the first place, could not the principle events in the life of Jesus Christ, have been so directed as to correspond with prophecy? The Messiah, according to Zechariah, would enter Jerusalem seated on an ass. Could not the disciples of Jesus take an ass, and seat their master upon it, that they might afterwards be able to say that the prediction of Zechariah had been fulfilled in his person?

They might, indeed, have done so in this instance, and perhaps in several others. But could they have done so for the whole prophecy? Consider, a prophecy comprehending an entire system of predictions, some relating to the most important events, others to the minutest circumstances: a prophecy bearing not only on every fact connected with the life of a man, and that man the Messiah; but, also, on what

would occur both before and after his appearance. The absolute impossibility of this is evident. There were predictions concerning the infancy of the Messiah, concerning his birth, the mission of a prophet, who would precede him. Had they chosen Jesus to be the pretended object of these prophecies even before he came into the world? Did they purposely cause him to be born in Bethlehem? Did they send before him a false precursor, and make a John the Baptist in anticipation of the time when they should make a Jesus Christ? There were predictions which announced the Messiah as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and as destined to suffer a fearful death. Were they so assured of Christ's complacency, that, after having chosen him without his consent, they could depend upon him to sustain his part to the end, and cause himself to be hated, persecuted, arrested, crucified? But there were also many predictions concerning the enemies of the Mes-

siah. When the Roman soldiers nailed Christ's body to the cross, and pierced his hands, and his feet, according to Psalm 22; when the Scribes and the Pharisees had accomplished to the very letter another part of this Psalm, by laughing him to scorn on the cross, (Psa. 32 : 6—8, with Matt. 27 : 39—43 ;) when the Jews rejected Christ, and clamored for his death; and then, a few days after, were converted by thousands, and adored him as their Lord and their God; did they thus act in obedience to the apostles? And did a few Gallilean fishermen thus dispose at will of the Sanhedrim, of the Jewish people, of Pilate, and of the Roman Empire?

Apply the same hypothesis to the history of our own time, and every one will feel how utterly insupportable it is. Suppose a manuscript should be discovered, bearing the date of the twelfth century, in which it should be predicted, that in the course of six hundred years a man should be born in Ajaccio, in Corsica, whom a

terrible revolution would make master of France; who would carry his victorious arms from the Rhine to the Nile, and fill the whole world with his fame; who would conquer united Europe at Marengo, Austerlitz, and Jena; who would be suddenly arrested in the midst of his career; who would find his power annihilated in an expedition against a great northern monarch; and who, lastly, after a brief exile, would re-ascend to the throne, again be driven from it, and be sent to die in a remote and desolate island. Suppose farther, that certain persons should thence conclude, that the author of this manuscript possessed the gift of prophecy. What would be thought of the man who should attempt to silence them by saying, "I can explain the mystery; all this is nothing but a pre-concerted scheme." A secret society, aware of this prediction, and wishing it to be considered as a prophecy, have originated all these events for the purpose of verifying it."

We may as well consider this direction of events impossible; and inquire whether it would not be practicable to invent them. Might not the apostles have related a tissue of false occurrences, such as would agree with the prophecy? Could they not declare that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, though he was actually born elsewhere; that he was crucified, though he died a natural death; and that his doctrine was rejected during his life, and received after his death, though there might be no truth in either of these assertions? What hindered them from inventing?

What! Every thing. History, which in an age so well known as that of Jesus Christ—the age of Augustus, Tiberius, Tacitus, Suetonius—would never have accredited so flagrant a lie; while nowhere do we find the statement of the apostles contradicted; nowhere do we find the slightest trace of the real facts, supposing this hypothesis to be true. The Jews, especially, in the midst of whom Jesus

Christ had lived, in whose presence the apostles first began to preach, (Acts 2;) and who were as much opposed to the disciples as they had been to the master; would they, we ask, have allowed them to ascribe to Jesus Christ, not only certain actions, but a complete history, without protesting against so shameless an imposture? And while they sought every opportunity against the Christians, (Acts 4: 5,) would they have neglected so easy a means of confounding them before all the people?

These are thoughts which may, indeed, suggest themselves to the mind of a man who is looking out for a new hypothesis the moment his former one fails him, but which cannot stand before a quarter of an hour's calm reflection. To revert to the imagined prophecy of Napoleon. Would not that man be universally regarded as a fool, who should affirm that the whole history of this distinguished personage was arranged expressly for its fulfillment? But

should we have a more favorable opinion of him, who would wave the difficulty, by saying, that this history was merely a fiction, composed by writers whose interest it was to verify the prophecy; and that Napoleon never existed; or that he had never performed the actions which have been ascribed to him?*

Yet the assertion would not be more absurd than that of the infidel, who accuses the apostles of having invented the history of their master. In some respects, we affirm, that it would be even less so. For besides the fact, that no one would be so deeply interested in contradicting the false historians of Napoleon, as would have been the Jews in contradicting those of Jesus Christ; the life of Christ occupies a far different place in the annals of the world than that of Napoleon. What! ancient and modern history, which unite

* There is a pamphlet written by M. Peres, in which the non-existence of Napoleon, is proved by the same arguments which are used by Dupuy, against the personal existence of Jesus Christ.

in bearing testimony to Jesus Christ, would they unite in bearing testimony to an imaginary being? and would they both rest upon a tissue of falsehoods, owing to the inconceivable audacity of the apostles; and the still more inconceivable silence of their adversaries? Leave such hypotheses to a Dupuy, or a Volney, and think rather with Rousseau upon this subject. He, with all his skepticism, never fell so low. Listen to this remarkable passage: "Shall we say that the history of the gospel was invented at will? My friend, it is not thus that men invent; and the deeds of Socrates, of which no one doubts, are less authentic than those of Jesus Christ. In fact, you evade the difficulty, without removing it. It would be more inconceivable that several men should agree to fabricate this book, than that a single one should be found who could furnish its subject."

SECTION VI.

WAS THE PROPHECY MADE AFTER THE EVENT?

It is then clear that the second explanation is more inadmissible than the first; and that it is absurd to suppose that the event was made for the prophecy. Let us consider another supposition, namely, that the pretended prophecy was made after the event. But first we ask, Is it necessary to have seen Napoleon, in order to be convinced of the falsehood of the supposition which we have just made concerning his history? All will answer, No. Is it necessary then, to have seen Jesus Christ, in order to acknowledge the falsehood of the analogous suppositions which have been made concerning his history? Acknowledge, then, that one may be perfectly sure of an event, without having seen it; and that Rousseau was utterly unreasonable in saying, that he would not admit the truth of any prophecy unless he had witnessed

its accomplishment. He has thought fit to proclaim the necessity of a condition which is not to be found in prophecy ; which all generations could not find there, and then, because this condition is wanting, he refuses to believe. 'This is mere prejudice, not candor. Let us now examine the last supposition.

If men, it is said, cannot do what they like with history, and with their fellow creatures, they can with books. Paper is discreet, and does not complain. We read of many forgeries of this kind in the history of letters. Besides, it is not necessary to suppose that the *whole* of the Old Testament was written after the death of Christ, but only that the apostles intercalated prophecies relative to the Messiah, which they inserted after the event.

Those who make this supposition, forget the place occupied by the prophecies in the Old Testament. They are found in so great a number, they form so connected a whole, they are so involved in the contem-

poraneous history, that it would have been easier to re-make the entire book, than to insert them after the event. Besides, there was one circumstance which greatly increased the difficulty. When the ten tribes which formed the kingdom of Israel separated from that of Judah, they carried with them the five books of Moses, the only part of the Old Testament then collected. These books have been preserved to the present day, by the Samaritans, who are descended from the Israelites. The apostles, therefore, not content with changing the Old Testament, must also have falsified the five books of Moses, as possessed by the Samaritans, the declared enemies of the Jews.

But this is the least difficulty. Is it not very certain, that, if the apostles had composed the prophecies after the event, they would have made them much clearer? Men now complain that they are not sufficiently precise. But impostors would have taken good care to avoid this re-

proach; and in their anxiety to secure universal faith in their prophecies, would have rendered their impostures perfectly transparent. This is our second difficulty.

Here is a third. If the prophecies of the Old Testament were made after the event, how is it that the Jews understood them before? Where had they read that a Messiah was promised them; that he would appear at an appointed time; that he would be born in Bethlehem; that he would descend from David, &c.? Had they read these things in predictions which did not exist, and which were forged many centuries later? These questions are unanswerable. Let us leave this point, and proceed to our last difficulty.

The apostles, says the objector, have greatly altered the text of the Old Testament. Paper is discreet, and does not complain. But he forgets that this paper might fall into the hands of indiscreet men, disposed to complain. Who were the natural guardians of the Old Testament?

'The Jews, the priests, the scribes, the rulers of the synagogues; that is to say, the murderers of Jesus Christ. It is well known that the Jews carried their respect for their sacred books even to superstition; so much so, that if in copying the Scriptures, they met with a letter larger or smaller than the rest, they carefully preserved these differences, which are still to be found in our Hebrew text, and in which their doctors saw singular mysteries. According to the supposition which we are considering, they now for the first time lay aside this excessive veneration, and without scruple consent to the most barefaced interpretations. And in whose favor do they make this wonderful exception? In favor of Christ's disciples, who attempt to prove by this lie, that He whom these same Jews have crucified, is the Messiah and the Son of God.

But granting that the apostles had gained,—with what? We know that the apostles had neither money nor credit; but,

granting that they had gained the guardians of the Old Testament in Jerusalem; granting that they had bought the silence, the concurrence of the Sanhedrim, of the priesthood in the city, from the first to the last of its members; the opportunity, doubtless, was favorable; they took advantage of the time when these furious enemies of Christ were discharging the remains of their wrath on his disciples, were dispersing them on every side, were stoning Stephen, were persuading Herod to behead James. We grant, notwithstanding all these difficulties, that the Old Testament was altered at Jerusalem to suit the Christians. We concede much, but still the objector has not advanced a step towards the proof of his position.

There existed many other manuscripts of the Old Testament. There was one, at least, in every synagogue, that is, in every city of Judea. But what do we say? The Jews had been scattered throughout the world for the space of two hundred years.

Every where they had Synagogues, and every where they read the Scriptures on the Sabbath day. Not only, therefore, must the apostles have gained the Jewish priests at Jerusalem, but also the scribes and elders of every city in Judea, with those of Antioch, of Rome, of Athens, of Corinth, of Philippi, of Babylon, of Thessalonica, in a word, of the whole world.

Finally, this universal alteration of the Sacred books of the Jews, brought about through the co-operation of all the Jewish priests, scribes, and elders in the world, was made with such profound secrecy, that no one has discovered it to the present day; that no remembrance of the authentic text has been preserved in any manuscript; and the deluded Jews, from century to century, confidently present us with the same text, which the Christians have altered, while the Jews still retained them in their own hands; and altered on purpose to condemn the Jews; while it was only necessary to preserve the text as it was, in

order to sustain their own hopes, and annihilate those of the Christians.

Is it still maintained that the prophecy was written after the event? It is of no use; the infidel must give up the point. There is no possibility of his holding out any longer at least in this strong-hold; which is his third and last. The truth is, that this hypothesis contains in itself alone, such an accumulation of absurdities, that the third explanation is more incredible than the second; and the second is more so than the first. If there be not a fourth, we, for our part, are resolved to believe in the intervention of God with regard to prophecy, that we may not be guilty of an excess of credulity. Let us review the order of our argumentation. There are only three natural explanations, as we have learned from Rousseau himself, of the agreement of the event with the prophecy. Either this agreement is purely accidental:—but prophecy is so full and precise, that this is no more possible than it would be to pro-

duce à Paradise Lost, by throwing printed characters at hazard. It is a philosophical absurdity. Or, the event has been made for the prophecy;—but this is no more possible than that the history of Napoleon was arranged or made at pleasure. It is a historical absurdity. Or, lastly, the prophecy has been made for the event:—but this supposition overturns all the laws of criticism. It is a literary absurdity. Turn which way you will, you can find no other issue. Impossibility, absurdity, will meet you at every step, and your understanding will remain unsatisfied, until at length you yield—which you may without shame in a contest of this nature—and say, with the Egyptian doctors, who had long withstood Moses, “This is the finger of God !” Exod. 8 : 19.

SECTION VII.

UNBELIEF OF THE JEWS.

It is hardly admissible to return to a position which has been discussed, and perhaps abandoned ; but in order to give the objector every opportunity to assail our argument, and to defend himself, which he can desire, we will allow here the suggestion of a thought in support of the first explanation, which is the only one of the three that has even the semblance of common sense, but which, on examination, will appear as untenable as the other two. The thought is this : The Jews do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, nor, consequently, that he has fulfilled the prophecies. Nevertheless, they do not believe that their books have been falsified ; nor do they deny the principal facts in the life of Jesus Christ. They must account for this by supposing the accidental coincidence which has already been considered.

Is it credible, that a whole nation should admit an absurdity, and admit it at the very time when it might be best investigated?

“A whole nation!” That is going rather too far. Many Jews believed in Jesus Christ. When Paul took his last journey to Jerusalem, the converted Jews were reckoned by many thousands, Acts 21 : 20. If, admitting the fulfillment of prophecy, you find it difficult to explain the obstinacy of the greater number, the conversion of these many thousands is, at least, as inexplicable without this fulfillment. But the incredulity of the many, viewed in its proper light, is as fresh proof of the truth of prophecy; first, because it was predicted; so that it is another prophecy fulfilled: secondly, because it is the unbelief of the Jews which so wonderfully guarantees the authenticity and integrity of the prophetic writings, as we have just shown. These two proofs united, the faith of some, the incredulity of others, have admirable force.

The reader would do well to peruse what Pascal says on this point.*

We find it difficult to imagine that the Jews would have admitted the accidental fulfillment of prophecy, had it been as inadmissible as we say. But the power of prejudice and obstinacy among this unhappy people must not be forgotten. They themselves give us the measure of their blindness by their opinion of the Messiah. For the Jews, believing in the prophecies, and not finding them fulfilled in Christ, expect another Messiah, in whom they will be accomplished. But, independent of the fact, that it would be too incredible that another man should be found who would unite in his person all the signs of a prophecy at once so full and so explicit; there are indications which it would be absolutely impossible to re-produce; and, therefore, the Messiah whom the Jews expect, cannot come. His time has gone by. Should he

* Thoughts, Second Part, viii. 11.

be born to-morrow, in ten years, a century hence, could they be sure that he was of the family of David, now that the Genealogical tables of the Jews no longer exist? Could he appear four hundred and ninety years after an edict had gone forth, allowing the Jews to return to their native land, now that the last edict of this nature was published more than two thousand years ago? Could he show himself in the second temple, now that this second temple is utterly destroyed? Could he put an end to sacrifices, now that eighteen hundred years have elapsed since their discontinuance? Question a Jew on this subject, urge him to tell you precisely what he thinks of the expected Messiah. We can tell you beforehand; for we have already made the trial. His answers will be so confused, as to convince you that the opinions of this wretched people are no authority in this matter; and that the men who were furious enough to commit the greatest of crimes, are prejudiced enough to justify it

by an absurd and contradictory supposition. They have not fairly examined the question. They made up their minds that Jesus, who opposed them, who openly condemned their vices, who overthrew their carnal hopes, could not be the Messiah; and, therefore, they adopted the first hypothesis that presented itself to their minds: just as the greater part of our modern skeptics begin by laying down, as a principle, that the Christian religion cannot be Divine; and then admit fanaticism, fraud, interpolation, whatever you will, without caring whether their suppositions can be defended, or whether they are airy theories, which, when once clearly defined, are forever refuted. We hope that no reader of these pages is a sharer in their injustice.

But if the Jews will not recognize Jesus Christ in the prophecies of the Old Testament, can they refuse to recognize themselves? Listen to what has been predicted of the Jews, since the time of Moses, in this book which they honor as the book

of God; and which they, having had the care of it, are well aware has undergone no alteration.

“But it shall come to pass if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed forever.”

“The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flieth: a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand: A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young: And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which *also* shall not leave thee *either* corn, wine, or oil, *or* the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until

thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee."

"And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee: *So that* the man *that* is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave: So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates."

"Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, *even* great plagues, and of long continu-

ance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.”

“And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God. And it shall come to pass, *that* as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other, and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, *even* wood and stone.”

“And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none

assurance of thy life : In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even ! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning ! for the fear of thy heart where-with thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.”

“And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again : and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bond-men and bond-women, and no man shall buy you.”

“And I will bring the land into desolation : and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you : and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies ; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them ; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword ; and they shall fall when none pursueth. And they that are

left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them."

"And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them."

"For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."

"So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sickness which the LORD hath laid upon it: And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD over-

threw in his anger, and in his wrath: Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD GOD of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt: For they went and served other gods, and worshiped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them: And the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book: And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.*

What shall we say to this prediction? No one will accuse it of obscurity. The language is almost as clear as that of history. And has it not been signally verified? Is it not still verified before our

* Deut. 28; Levit. 26: 32, 33, 36, 39; Jer. 24: 9; Amos, 9: 9; Deut. 29: 22—28.

eyes, trait for trait? This will appear more wonderful if we consider each article separately. Could the Romans be better described than they are here? "A nation coming from afar, like the eagles;" speaking a "language" unknown to the Jews; whilst every other nation that had made war upon them came from climes less distant, and spoke languages very analogous to the Hebrew? The siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, is it not drawn to the very life? These high and fenced walls, on which they trusted throughout the land, this dreadful famine, these families disputing for a morsel of food, these children devoured by their own mothers; could we not imagine that, instead of a prophecy, we were reading the recital of the siege by the historian Josephus? The calamities which have fallen upon the Jews, have they not been "wonderful," and "of long continuance?" Do they not still continue; and have they not lasted nearly eighteen centuries? Have not the vanquished Jews, contrary to the general policy of their conquer-

ors, been torn from their native soil, and forbidden to return to it on pain of death? And more: they might, at least, have been transported to one common retreat, where they might have formed a colony; but instead of that, have they not been dispersed on every side; and even in the remotest corners of the world, are we not sure to find a remnant of this scattered people? And yet, wonderful to relate! have they not invariably remained distinct from every other nation? And how striking is the image of the prophet Amos, who compares them to corn sifted in a sieve, while not a single grain falls to the earth. And can we fail to recognize in these traits the condition of the Jews in foreign nations: ease ever flying from them; their heart trembling; their lives in jeopardy. Have we not read in Josephus, that the Jewish prisoners were led by thousands into Egypt, at two different times, under Titus, and under Adrian; and that these unhappy slaves were estimated at so low a price, that

eleven thousand were allowed to perish of hunger? Have not the Jews literally been "an astonishment, a proverb, and a bye word," among men? And that, not in Christian countries only, but among Mohammedans, and even among Pagans? * And have not their calamities been the wonder of the whole world? Has not their condition been considered, in all ages, as something out of the ordinary course of nature, and as the effect of a direct curse from God?

Let any one try, now, to explain this prophecy by Rousseau's three hypotheses. *Accidental coincidence?* How can we admit this, when the prophecy is so explicit, and when it refers to circumstances so special, to a history unique in the annals of the world. *Interpolation?* But when could it have been made, to meet the exigency of events which lasted eighteen centuries, and which still continue? *The invention or arrangement of history?*

* Buchanan's Christian Researches in Asia, pp. 297, 298.

How can this be possible in reference to facts which occur at this present time, and under our own eyes? Here you have what Rousseau demands. You are witness of the event. If you are not witness of the prophecy, at any rate you are witness that there has been no interpolation; and this suffices. In short, you may affirm that accidental coincidence is impossible, unless you admit that it is possible in every case; which is contrary to common sense, and to Rousseau himself. Thus if one must be credulous, not to believe the prophecies concerning the Messiah; one must be still more so, not to believe those respecting the Jews. It would require a degree of credulity, of which few are capable. We promised to show that those who reject prophecy fall into absurdity. Have we not fulfilled our promise? Really, unless one has determined not to be convinced, it would seem that he must yield to such considerations.

CHAPTER III.

PROOF FROM MIRACLES. THE PROPAGATION OF
CHRISTIANITY. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.
THE MORALITY AND THE DOCTRINES OF THE
GOSPEL.

WE will make only one more observation. Prophecy is but one of the many proofs in favor of revelation. Had we chosen another, instead of this, we could equally have shown that it requires more credulity to reject than to receive revelation. We could have demonstrated this with respect to miracles, the propagation of christianity, and the character of Jesus Christ; not to mention the morality or the doctrines of the gospel.

SECTION I.

MIRACLES.

It is very easy to say that the miracles of the Bible were falsely contrived. But

were this the case, how was it that so many of Christ's Disciples went throughout the world attesting facts which they knew to be false, (for men cannot be mistaken with respect to facts, as they may be with respect to doctrines, when they had no other reward to expect for their imposture, than reproach, imprisonment, and death.)* How was it that thousands believed their testimony, even in the very cities where these imaginary events, on which their preaching rested, were said to have taken place; while the interests, the passions, the habits of these proselytes conspired to make them cleave to their ancient belief. How was it that the enemies of the gospel acknowledged the miracles of Jesus Christ, and formed various conjectures to account for them, when it would have been so easy to silence the apostles by a single question, "Is this true?" For the Jews attributed the miracles of Jesus Christ to Satan; the

* Pascal's Thoughts, part second xvii. 56.

pagans attributed them to magic; but neither denied them. We who live in a more enlightened age, cannot admit either supposition. Yet the fact remains, and the gospel is justified.

SECTION II.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL.

How can we explain the fact, that the gospel has overspread the earth, if God be not for it? It is in vain that the success of Mohammed is urged in reply. Every thing is different, every thing is opposite, in the two cases. Mohammed, with powerful resources, triumphed over a feeble resistance. Jesus Christ with the least possible outward aid, triumphed over the most formidable opposition. The doctrine of Mohammed favored the tastes and passions of mankind: that of Jesus Christ withstood them to the face. Mohammed employed force of arms, and was a mur-

derer for his religion. Jesus Christ employed nothing but persuasion, and was the martyr of his. The success of Mohammed is in the natural course of things: that of Jesus Christ is contrary to all human expectation.*

SECTION III.

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

How can we explain, in a simple individual—what do we say? in a fanatic, or an imposter—a moral perfection, of which another example is not to be found in the whole human race? or, if you think that the character of Christ is drawn from imagination, how can you explain the fact, that a few fishermen should have conceived the idea of a character of such perfection, as no author, even in the most enlightened countries, has ever equalled, either before or since?

* Pascal's Thoughts, Art. xii.

SECTION IV.

MORALITY AND DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL.

And the morality of the gospel, the incomparable superiority of which even philosophers are constrained to admit; and its doctrines concerning God, and a future state, so just, so simple, and the whole so new! There is not one of these points on which we could not embarrass the infidel, as much as we did on the subject of the prophecies. Be assured, that incredulity cannot stand a close investigation. Rousseau himself, notwithstanding his apparent depth, has merely glanced at these important questions in his "Vicaire Savoyard." Examine it: you will find every where false assertions, false principles; and whatever of truth is blended with it, serves only to condemn him by his own testimony. We appeal to his celebrated passage on the Scriptures, and on the character of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, he finds in Jesus

Christ superhuman virtue, and in the gospel a perfect moral code: on the other hand, he finds in the same gospel doctrines which seem to him strange and incredible. In presence of this two-fold view how ought he to reason? Ought he to say, "Since this book sheds divine light on moral questions, which are the least subject to dispute, I am bound to receive it as coming from God; and believe its testimony on points which are beyond the sphere of my observation, such as the thoughts and designs of the Creator?" or, ought he to say, "since there are in this book, on subjects with which I am little acquainted, certain statements which astonish me, I am bound to reject it, though it is radiant with truth on the clearest points?" He adopts the latter alternative; for his pretended suspension of judgment exists only in words. We maintain that Rousseau, and all who follow him, show themselves strangely credulous in thus deciding: and he is the more inexcusable in

his error, inasmuch as he obviously felt the force of the evidence. "'The life and death of Christ," he says, "are those of a God; and we cannot tell whether or not he be an imposter! The morality of the gospel is perfect; and one cannot tell whether or not it is the fruit of falsehoods! The apostles have invented nothing: and we cannot tell whether they have spoken truth, or whether they have lied!" What are the pretended contradictions of the gospel after this? Ah! reader, you will find no repose, even for your reason itself, but in faith; provided your reason is *reasonable*, and not mere *reasoning*.

CHAPTER IV.

MAN'S NEED OF A REVELATION.

BUT we are sometimes asked, what need have we, after all, of a revelation, when without its aid, we can have such a religion as that of nature.

“Without its aid!” Do you then think that believers in natural religion owe nothing to revelation, in their ideas of God, of conscience, and the immortality of the soul? Christianity has been in the world eighteen centuries. It has proclaimed, with perfect clearness and assurance, the existence of God, and the future life of man. It is not, then, surprising that a philosopher should arise and support these truths in his turn. He establishes them by the aid of reason alone, say you. But who knows whether revelation has not been to reason what the clear-sighted is to the blind, whom he instructs in reading and

writing, till the blind man is able to do both alone? We see but one means of ascertaining whether this be the case or not. It is to ascertain what reason did before revelation was generally given to the world. This is a question of history. What degree of light did natural religion display, before there was a revealed religion? And yet this is a point which we cannot completely solve. For if the Bible is true, revelation is as ancient as the world itself; and the patriarchal revelation, which takes its date from the creation of the first man, may have penetrated among pagan nations, where the Mosaic revelation was unknown. But, in short, what religion had mankind before the coming of Christ? Inquire not among the more remote nations, but among the most civilized; among the Greeks. What was their belief concerning God, and a future state?

It is not necessary that we should remind the reader what was the light, or rather the darkness of this people. Rous-

seau speaks of it in his "Profession of Faith;" and on this subject he exhibits admirable truth and eloquence. It is true, the Greek philosophers were exempt from the superstitions of the vulgar; but what did they substitute for them? They did not believe in a hundred different gods, nor in the infernal regions of Pluto; but they had no clear conceptions, either of the unity of God, or of a future state. There was not one among them who taught these two truths clearly, simply, and positively. We know that Socrates, when near death, expressed himself on the immortality of the soul, as one who fears to say too much. And do you think that Plato or Aristotle ever spoke of God as Rousseau speaks.

But admitting that reason, without the help of revelation, could have discovered the doctrines of natural religion, would these doctrines be sufficient? Have you so little reflected on God, the world, and yourself? For we cannot deny that we are

sinners, nor that sin is a violation of moral order. To repair this disorder, is the grand problem of the Christian religion. But does natural religion solve—does it even show the full bearing of this problem? If the Bible is a true revelation, the merely natural philosopher is profoundly ignorant both of God and man. His religion sufficient! And it is in this age and country, where philosophy has been put to the test, and has been found so fearfully wanting, that this assertion is made. Was it sufficient for the infidels of the last century? Did it give them peace of mind? Did it render them humble, charitable, and pure? Let their lives and deaths reply! For it is in the life, it is in the person of the infidel, that we must learn him to appreciate his religion, and not in the pages of a book. Were you called upon to judge of doctrines by their advocates, what should you find the most clearly proved. The truth of the christian religion by Pascal, living in a holy and irreproachable manner, suffering

patiently, and dying in peace ; or the sufficiency of natural religion, by Rousseau, who —— ? But the detail is superfluous ; and we will not offend the delicacy of our readers by spreading it before them. One would think that a just God, to confound this unhappy sophist, had allowed him to exemplify the fallacy of his own maxims by his conduct. He could not but perceive that he himself was his own refutation ; and that, whatever effect his eloquence might produce, should be counteracted by the remembrance of his life.

We are fully aware that it will not always do to hold a doctrine responsible for the conduct of its advocate ; for this might be used as an argument against the religion of the Bible. It is not a conclusive argument against the doctrine of Rousseau ; but still it should make us pause and reflect. Doubtless, there are infidels who are both honorable and virtuous men in the eyes of the world. There have been such among the heathen. But even for these, natural

religion neither can nor will suffice. The doctrine of Christ alone is able to sanctify, console, and save.

CHAPTER V.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE GOSPEL.

BUT it is this doctrine of Christ you say, which you find so repulsive. It is so little in harmony with the ideas you naturally form of God, so incredible in many respects.

This ought not to restrain you. When we are once convinced by solid proofs, that the Bible has God for its author, we ought to believe it, even when its doctrines appear most strange and wonderful. May not our ideas be erroneous? And how do you know; perhaps this doctrine surprises you only because it is true? This is what Jesus Christ said to the Jews: "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." John 8: 4, 5.

But there are aspects in which this same doctrine appears perfectly clear; and it would furnish us, at need, with a fresh proof in favor of Christianity. This is what is called, *internal evidence*. We did not mention it before, because, strong as it is, it can only be appreciated by one who is open to conviction, and who begins attentively to study revelation. But if the arguments which we have adduced can stimulate the reader to undertake this study, a new order of considerations will claim his attention; and the contents of the Bible will complete the justification of its theology.

You will be struck, in the first place, at finding in the Bible, written by authors, many in number, and separated from each other by intervening centuries, a marvelous connection and unity. You will see the plan of revelation gradually unfolding itself with revolving ages, and exhibiting the most evident marks of oneness of design, and of its emanation from one com-

mon author. Who can this author be, but God alone? What other mind could comprehend fifteen centuries at a glance? You will then think it as incredible that the Bible should be the work of man, as that a perfect picture should be formed by fifty painters, who should pass in succession before the canvass, and each give a stroke with his pencil in passing.

You will afterwards be delighted to see what light the Bible sheds upon subjects the most useful, and the most profound. You will find, respecting God, his Law and his government, ideas as new as they are instinct with truth. You will learn to know yourself so well, that you will be constrained to confess, that He who made the Bible, made also the heart of man. You will find the solution of these grand problems, which have ever reduced philosophy to despair,—the origin of evil; the disorders of society; the contradictions which are observable in man. You will rest satisfied that the Bible cannot be ex-

plained without God, as you will acknowledge that the world cannot be explained without the Bible.

You will be strengthened in this conviction by comparing the instructions of this book with the contemporary lessons of human wisdom. Look at the Jews, among whom reason had done comparatively nothing. Look at the Greeks, among whom it had wrought prodigies. How is it, that while the first possessed the most sublime views of religion, the other had only vague conjectures among their philosophers, and superstitions among the multitude? Whilst a few Gallilean fishermen trace the only picture of perfect holiness that the world ever saw; whilst they announce *one* God, just, wise, merciful; whilst they reveal a blissful eternity, and show the way by which it may be attained; all is confused, abandoned, and disordered in Rome and Greece. Let us go back to the Old Testament. We must retrograde six hundred years, to reach the last of the Jewish

prophets. For the Old Testament is the most ancient of books, and Jewish history is several centuries in advance of that of Greece and Rome. The very time when the prophets Malachi, Haggai, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Hosea,* were preaching this glorious doctrine to the Jews, "Before me there was no God, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Saviour. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts." "cease to do evil; learn to do well." "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful." Isa. 43: 10, 11, 25. 6: 3. 1: 16, 17. Joel 2: 13; this very time corresponds with that of the seven sages, when philosophy timidly assayed its first steps; when Thales drew the world from

* From five to eight hundred years before Christ.

water, and Pythagoras taught the metempsychosis; Anaxagoras had hardly appeared, and Socrates was not yet born. At this time David celebrated the creation, providence, and grace, in strains which, from age to age give pure and exquisite delight to every pious mind, when confessing his sin, as an act of rebellion against God, but at the same time confiding in the loving kindness of Him whom he had offended, he wrote these words, which have no counterpart in the whole of profane antiquity: "I acknowledge my transgression; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." *Psa.* 51: 3, 4, 7. This period preceded that in which Homer and Hesiod, by their beautiful, but vain fables, excited the admiration of their countrymen. Moses, who published the Decalogue, that everlasting code of the purest morality, the foundation

of all laws and of all society, was contemporary with Orpheus: and the Greeks wept over the adventures of Eurydice, while the Jews listened with terror to the proclamation of the law from Mount Sinai. Abraham, who understood the value of faith, and the necessity of implicit obedience to the commands of God.—Joseph who, when urged to commit an action which was regarded as a trivial fault among the heathen, cried, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” correspond to Jnachus, Cadmus, Cecrops—to the most profound moral darkness.

So strong a light, on the one hand, such total obscurity on the other; and the light among a people deemed barbarous, and the darkness among the most civilized; who can explain this, if the Bible be not the book of God? How wonderful a people are the Jews! Before the coming of Christ, and when they alone read the prophetic writings, they were, in their knowledge of

God, unequaled among the nations of the earth; and hardly had the gospel extended to the Greeks and Romans, than these same Jews fell as much below as they had formerly surpassed them. And yet, men cannot perceive that they owed their former superiority to their possession of the Old Testament, and their subsequent inferiority to their rejection of the New.

You will find all this in religion; but you will find greater things than these. You will find doctrines perfectly adapted to your moral necessities. You will find in Jesus Christ, the God of man; the God of sinners; your God. Miracles, prophecies, will then appear merely secondary proofs, to which will succeed moral evidence, more precious and persuasive still. Your difficulties will be lost in a flood of light; and you will confess, that if the external evidence in favor of the Bible is such that you cannot but believe it, however strange its contents may appear, the internal evidence, in its turn, is so conclu-

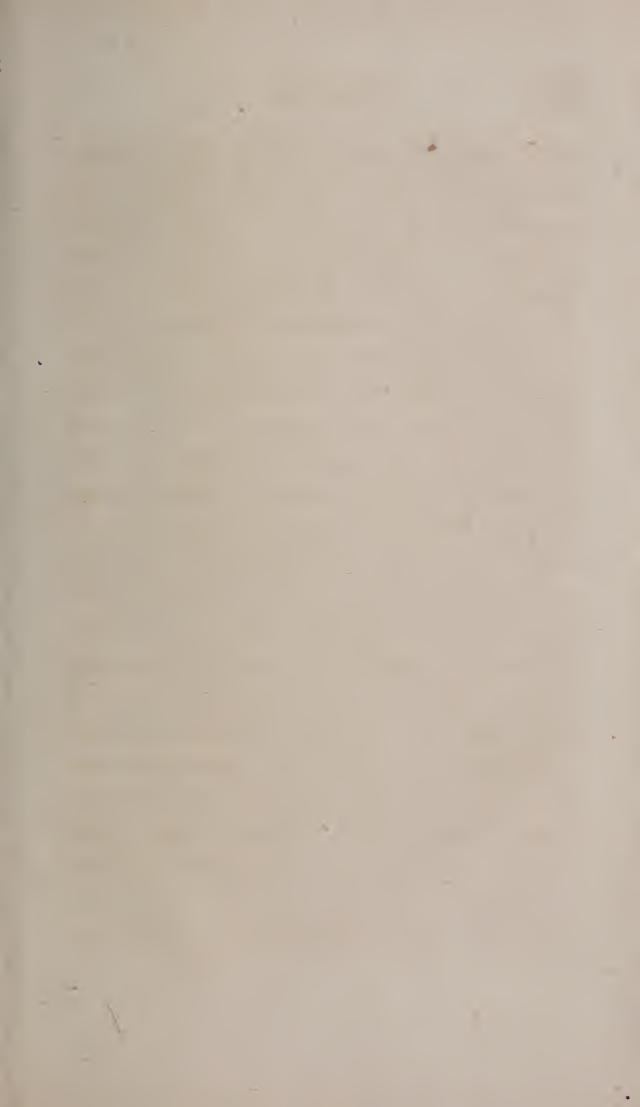
sive, that you would recognize the Bible as the work of God, were you to find it in a desert, unsupported by any external testimony. We express ourselves warmly. It is because we speak from personal experience. We confess there was a time when we doubted; but we examined, and we believed. O reader will not this blessed experience be yours also?

But why, you will naturally ask, are not all men convinced of the truth of religion, if the evidence in its favor is so strong? You are quite sincere, as you think; and flatter yourself, that if you do not believe, it is no fault of yours.

If men are not more generally convinced of the truth of Christianity, it is because they give no heed to it; or because they voluntarily reject it. You are sincere, say you? Sincere in the sense of the infidel, you may be, and more so, perhaps, than many of that class. But sincerity is not all that is requisite. In vain might the husbandman sow tares in his field, sin-

cerely believing that he was sowing wheat: he would nevertheless reap nothing but tares. So the doctrines of infidelity, with whatever sincerity they may be received, can neither enlighten nor save mankind. It is truth that he requires. But we will say more. Wherever sincerity really exists, Christianity is not far off. Can that sincerity be genuine, which does not lead us to examine? Seek truth. Seek it by every possible means. Then you will be sincere: but then, without possessing prophetic power, we foresee that you will soon be a believer. And should it be true, dear reader, that the Christian religion is of God! Should it be true that you must believe the gospel in order to be saved! Should it be true, that in neglecting it, you are consigning your soul to eternal perdition! Do not, we beseech you in Christ's stead, defer this examination until it shall be forever too late.

THE END.



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